

# THOMAS NELSON PAGE TELLS OF EARLY DAY

Succeeded at First But Later Learned  
What Rejection Meant—Story De-  
clined Grew to be a Novel.

New York Sun. . . . .

When Thomas Nelson Page submits to being interviewed, which is not often, the task of the interviewer is made enjoyable not only by what the author says, but by his manner of saying it. Much as Mr. Page dislikes the pronoun of the first person, and opposed as he is to talking about himself in print, his is so nearly the perfection of traditional courtesy and there is so much of geniality in his smile that one must forgive him many questions instead of just being able to mention a theme at the outset and then just listen.

Mr. and Mrs. Page have just got to New York on their way to Washington, after dividing the summer between a trip to Europe and a rest at York Harbor, Me. Mr. Page has about completed the enlargement of his monograph on Gen. Robert E. Lee, thus making over the work into a biography.

"My reason for rewriting the monograph," said Mr. Page in answer to a question, "is that the English reviewers, when the book was published over there a couple of years ago, said that it would have been more complete if I had given the military side of Lee, on which his great reputation was founded, as fully as I had endeavored to give the personal side.

"Yes, I have been doing some other work also—some stories—and for some weeks past have been working in a way on a novel. No, there isn't anything I could say about it except that it is along rather new lines for me. My idea," Mr. Page continued, "is to try to cover in my books as completely as I am capable of doing the evolution of society in America, and in doing this, while my books are not written in any chronological sequence, I try to take things that strike me as most vital in society—at least as they catch me in the progression of society—just as they deal with a matter in which I am profoundly interested."

"How did you come to write your first book?"

"Well, I had always been ambitious to write, and I had scribbled from the time I was a boy. Just prior to the time of the Yorktown centennial in 1881, when they were talking about a celebration, I got the idea that I should like to write up Yorktown for the old Scribner's Magazine. This magazine had published some verses of mine in negro dialect two or three years before, and when I applied for the privilege of writing the article on Yorktown, which was the old home of my family, with a view of bettering my chances for the billet, I sent the editor a story and a poem. The story was accepted and the poem was returned, though that too was long afterward accepted and published. The story was 'Marse Chan.'"

"Did you go through the usual course of having manuscripts returned?"

"Not in the beginning at least, so far as magazines were concerned, though I did in the case of some newspapers, and I have since gone through that course with magazines. In fact I may say that I am still pursuing that course."

"Do you not send them under your own name?"

"Yes, always. It is this way: When I have written anything that I think worth sending out I am likely to try it on an editor, making it very clearly understood that he must not take it unless he wants it, and if he doesn't appear very eager about it I am likely to let the manuscript soak for a little while and then go at it with a fresh eye. I am speaking of a special editor or two, in whose judgment I have confidence, for though the editorial judgment is far from infallible the trained professional mind, added to a feeling for literature, is something for which I have great respect."

"Do you always rewrite in such a case?"

"The cases in which I rewrite are not very numerous, but I always try to ascertain why the editor is not as ardent about the story as I have hoped, and then I make an effort to better the story."

"Is it your experience that editors are apt to differ in their views as to the merits of a story?"

"Oh, yes, in every case, as far as I know, there has been a difference, due, I think, to the makeup of magazines. One editor might feel that a certain sort of story would fill a gap in his magazine, while another might have on hand as many of that kind as he wished. Then an editor might take a story at one time and not wish it at another for the same reason."

"'Marse Chan' was not published for four years after its acceptance because, I believe, the year 1881 was thought too soon after the War Between the Sections to publish a story dealing so exclusively with the Southern side. At any rate that was a fact, though when it was published it



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could not have met with a kinder reception."

"Did you ever write a story that was declined and that afterward proved successful?"

"Yes, a story that afterward proved as successful I think as any of my others, though the failure to accept it was for reasons such as I have referred to."

"Would you care to give an instance?"

"A story called 'Run to Seed,' which I have always esteemed one of the best things I ever wrote, was declined by a magazine because it had in it what the editor termed profanity. No, I have never had a completed novel declined, but my last novel, 'John Marvel,' was written 10 or 12 years ago in the form of a short story that would have run through only two or three numbers of a magazine. It was shown to an editor who did not want it, and afterward to another who did. But a condition was attached to its publication which the second editor did not care to accept, and by this time the story was beginning to expand in my mind in a larger way and I was beginning to feel that if I were going to deal with vital problems of the present day I should use a larger canvas. Accordingly I laid the story by, and eventually it developed into a novel."

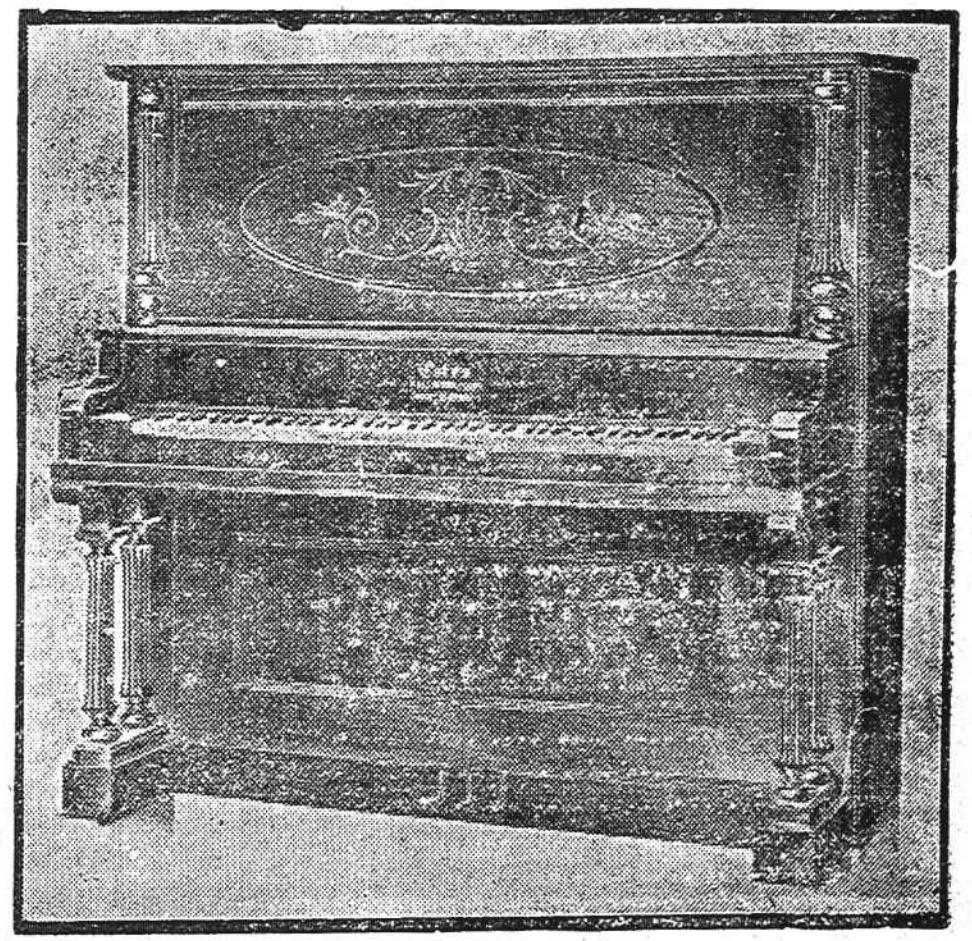
"Is it your experience that a real occurrence suggests a story?"

"Frequently. Some one picturesque or tragic incident will take hold of a man and as he begins to revolve it in his mind its relation to life at large will assume its due place, and then when he undertakes to present it in its proper setting, if he would be true to conditions, he finds a reflection of life much broader than that he first had in mind. I knew of a young preacher once going and rescuing an unfortunate girl in substantially the same manner I have pictured in 'John Marvel,' and I think this was really the genesis of the story."

"No, there is no especial literary centre in America as there is in England, at least not in the sense that London is the literary centre of that country or Paris is the literary capital of France. From time to time there have been places or sections which might be described as literary centres. For example, many years ago Boston was. Then there grew up in the South after the war a set of writers, who though scattered dealt with matters with a Southern setting. Now I am informed by the Sun there is a centre to the westward, and I have not mentioned New York. Tom Aldrich used to say that whenever a literary man died in New England the New York papers would assert that the literary centre of the country had moved to New York. If it has not already moved hither, in my opinion the literary centre is eventually to be here, for one reason, if no other, that this is the centre of publishing. There are, of course, many other obvious reasons."

"Why New York has not more manifestly become the literary centre of the country in the sense of a London or a Paris, in my opinion, is that owing to natural conditions New York has given itself up to commerce, and the chief activities here operate so generally to the commercial as to overwhelm other activities. One great department of literary activity has made this a centre in its great newspapers and periodicals. For the quiet and more abstract side of literature it seems to me the rush and roar and

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### NOTICE OF FINAL SETTLEMENT AND DISCHARGE.

All persons holding claims against the estate of James C. Davis, deceased, are hereby requested to render same, duly attested to the undersigned, or my attorneys, Blease & Dominik, on or before the first day of January, 1911, and all parties indebted to the said estate will make immediate settlement.

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned will make final settlement on the said estate on the 8th day of February, 1911, at 11 o'clock in the forenoon, and will immediately thereafter apply to the Probate Judge for Newberry county for her final discharge as Administratrix of the said estate.

Nellie E. Davis,  
Administratrix.  
Newberry, S. C., Nov. 28, 1910.  
11-29-11aw-6t.

### NOTICE TO CREDITORS.

All persons holding claims or demands against the estate of Mary M. Humbert, deceased, are hereby notified to present same duly attested to John M. Kinard or to our attorneys, Messrs. Hunt, Hunt & Hunter, on or before the 27th day of December, 1910.

John M. Kinard,  
James P. Kinard,  
Executors of the last will and testament of Mary M. Humbert, deceased.  
11-22-4t-11aw.

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